

JACKIE ROBINSON

Jack Roosevelt Robinson

Inducted to the Hall of Fame in: 1962

Primary team: Brooklyn Dodgers

Primary position: 2nd Baseman

“A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives,” Jackie Robinson once said.

The impact Robinson made on Major League Baseball is one that will be forever remembered. On April 15 each season, every team in the majors celebrates Jackie Robinson Day in honor of when he truly broke the color barrier in baseball, becoming the first African-American player in the 20th century to take the field in the big leagues. He opened the door for many others and will forever be appreciated for his contribution to the game.

Robinson stood up for equal rights even before he did so in baseball. He was arrested and court-martialed during training in the Army for refusing to move to the back of a segregated bus. He was eventually acquitted of the charges and received an honorable discharge. He then started his professional baseball career.

The second baseman played for the Kansas City Monarchs as a part of the Negro Leagues until Brooklyn Dodgers general manager Branch Rickey decided he wanted to integrate

baseball. Rickey wanted Robinson not only for his talent and style of play, but also because of his demeanor. He knew he was sending him down a tough road and thought Robinson was the man to handle it without fighting back. Robinson endured teammates and crowds who opposed his presence, and threats to himself and his family, with honor and grace.

Robinson joined the Montreal Royals, the Dodgers top farm team, in 1946 and led the International League with a .349 average and 40 stolen bases. He earned a promotion to the Dodgers and made his major league debut on April 15, 1947.

“It was the most eagerly anticipated debut in the annals of the national pastime,” authors Robert Lipsyte and Pete Levine wrote. “It represented both the dream and the fear of equal opportunity, and it would change forever the complexion of the game and the attitudes of Americans.”

At the end of his first season, Robinson was named the Rookie of the Year. He was named the NL MVP just two years later in 1949, when he led the league in hitting with a .342 average and steals with 37, while also notching a career-high 124 RBI. The Dodgers won six pennants in Robinson’s 10 seasons, but his contributions clearly extended far beyond the field.